

# The Call of Spanish Fork Canyon



A view of Spanish Fork Canyon with Tistle in the background. The road was on the south side of the river instead of the north as it is

today. Photograph taken by George E. Anderson.

Picture courtesy Bell G. Francis.

*Spanish Fork Canyon*

**Allen B. Williams**

Compiled by

Delila G. Williams

## **The Call of Spanish Fork Canyon**

I came from people who believe the home place is as vital and necessary as the beating of the heart.

By Henry Crews

Inasmuch as the writer, Jack London wrote a book entitled "The Call Of the Wild", This project will be called "The Call of Spanish Fork Canyon."

## THE CALL OF Spanish Fork Canyon

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## The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition

The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition through Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico in 1776 is the first recorded incident of people in this area. It was coincident with the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution in the eastern section of the new nation.

The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition was commissioned to leave Santa Fe, New Mexico to find a more direct route to Monterey on the California coast and to explore new mission possibilities for the Catholic Fathers.

Altho the name Escalante has become better known than Dominguez, who should rightfully be acknowledged as the leader, further research is placing Dominguez where he belongs. Steps are now being taken to name Dominguez Hill at the mouth of Spanish Fork Canyon where the explorers first viewed what is now known as Utah Valley. The name "Dominguez Dome" has been suggested for the place where Father Dominguez preached a sermon and exhorted the men on October 11 to submit themselves wholly to the will of God and where they cast lots to determine whether to abandon the quest for Monterey or to press on.

The failure of the Spaniards to capitalize on the information brought back by Domiguez and Esclante about central Utah as the area was settled seventy one years later by American Mormons rather than the by Spanish Catholics.

The name of Spanish Fork is found in John C. Fremont's

map of the area published in 1845. Thus it was not named by the Mormon settlers of the region, who did not reach Utah until 1847, two years later.



HYRUM LORENZO STERLING, Senior

Compiled and written by his granddaughter  
Mildred Sterling Thomas...May 16, 1938



Hyrum Lorenzo Sterling

and

Mary Archibald Sterling



[The following paragraphs were taken from the above history and tells about the "Pole Canyon Ranch" in Spanish Fork Canyon shortly after 1868.]

On January 23rd 1868, Hyrum Lorenzo Sterling and Mary Archibald were married and to them eleven children were born: Mary [Boyack], Catherine [Hopla], Hyrum L. Jr., Robert A., Rebecca [McKell], Christena [Cornaby], Charlotte [Cornaby], Elizabeth Ann [Johnson], Cyrus, John W., and Laverne [Jex].

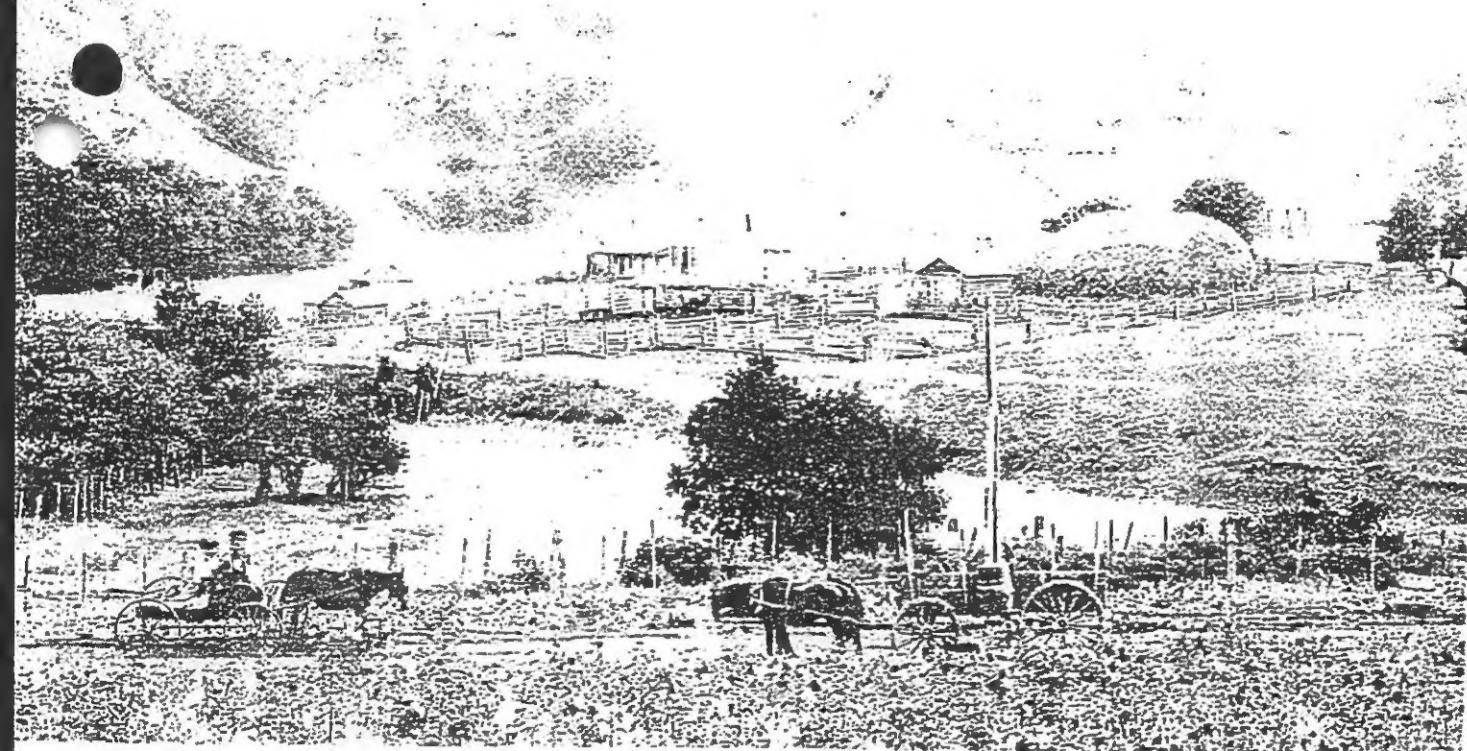
After their marriage, Hyrum homesteaded the old "Pole Canyon Ranch" and later bought the homesteads of Mathew Thomas, Jack Angus and Andrew Dudley. He engaged in ranching, cattle and horse raising, as well as feed crops. He supplied the stone quarry, construction crews and Thistle with meat, butchered at the ranch and delivered. In 1904 he sold the ranch to his sons-in-law, William and Holly Cornaby and retired.

While they were raising their family they spent their summers on the ranch and moved to town late in the fall so the children could attend school. Their home on the ranch was the vacation spot of many of their friends who were always made welcome; even travelers and tramps were never turned away without food and lodging. Indians, too, never went up or down the canyon without stopping in and many times spent weeks in the grove on the ranch, and of course Hyrum always saw that their needs were supplied.

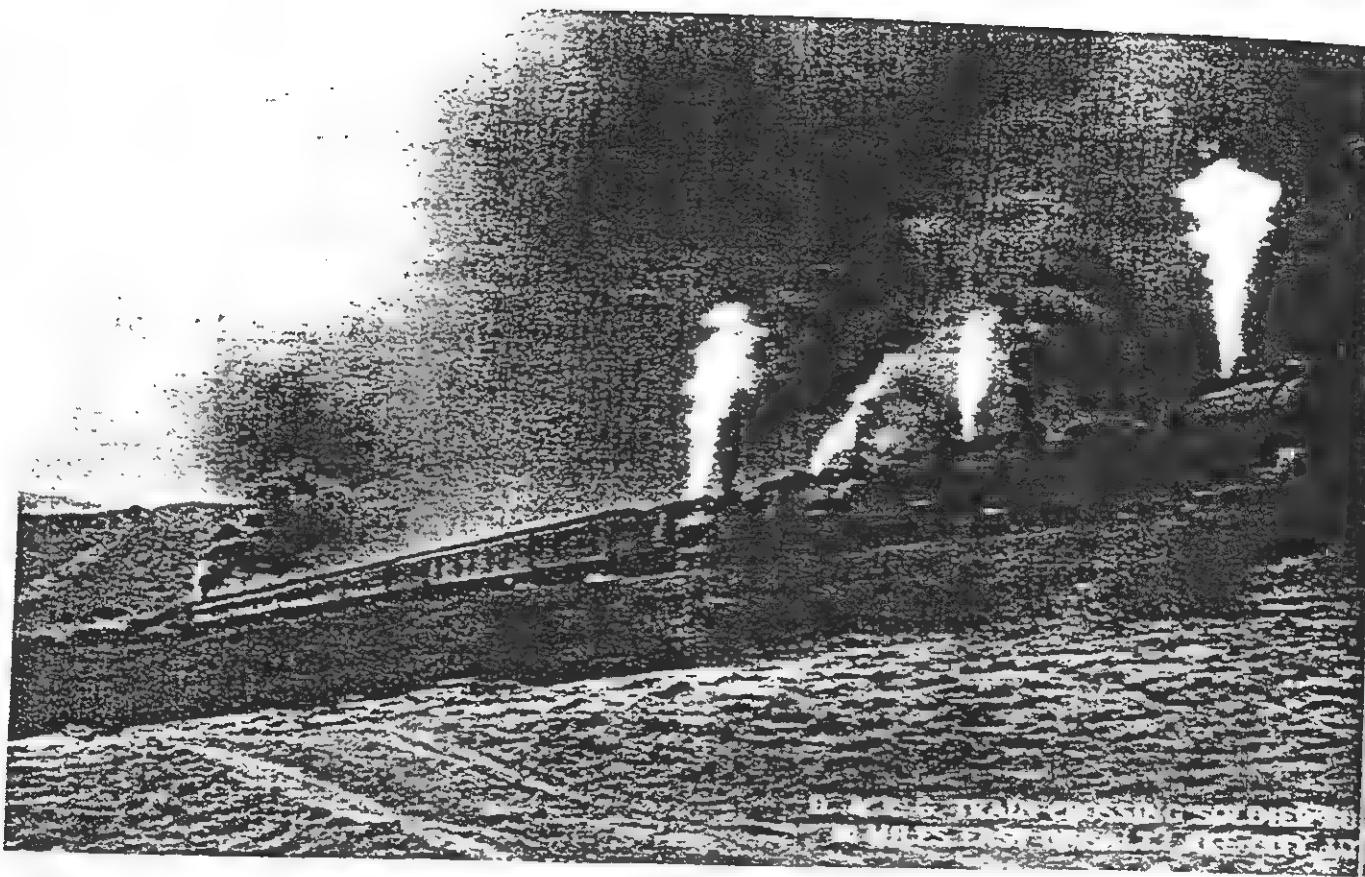
They had many varied experiences on the ranch, as the country was wild and almost unsettled at the time they moved there. The Indians were troublesome and many times they drove the cattle and horses away. In some cases they killed the ranchers and in one case they killed the Given family; however they did not harm "Big Hy" or his family. It was the policy of the Sterling family to always be kind to the Indians and make them welcome when they came to the ranch. At one time the Indians drove all of the stock away except an old white mule. Hyrum rode the mule to follow them. As he rode through the ford of the river, he noticed that water was still in the tracks of the stock which indicated that they had gone through just a few minutes before. Although he knew the Indians were close, he followed until he found his stock and brought them back to the ranch.

Years later an old Indian was having dinner at his home and he asked Hyrum where his white mule was. Hyrum told him the mule was dead and asked why he wanted to know.

The Indian related the story of how they had driven his stock away and Hyrum following them on the old mule, and how they had hidden in the willows close enough to touch Hyrum as he passed through the ford. Hyrum asked him why they hadn't killed him as he had no gun with him. The Indian replied, "All the same as killing 'nother injun Hyrum. You are a brave man." They had a good laugh about it.



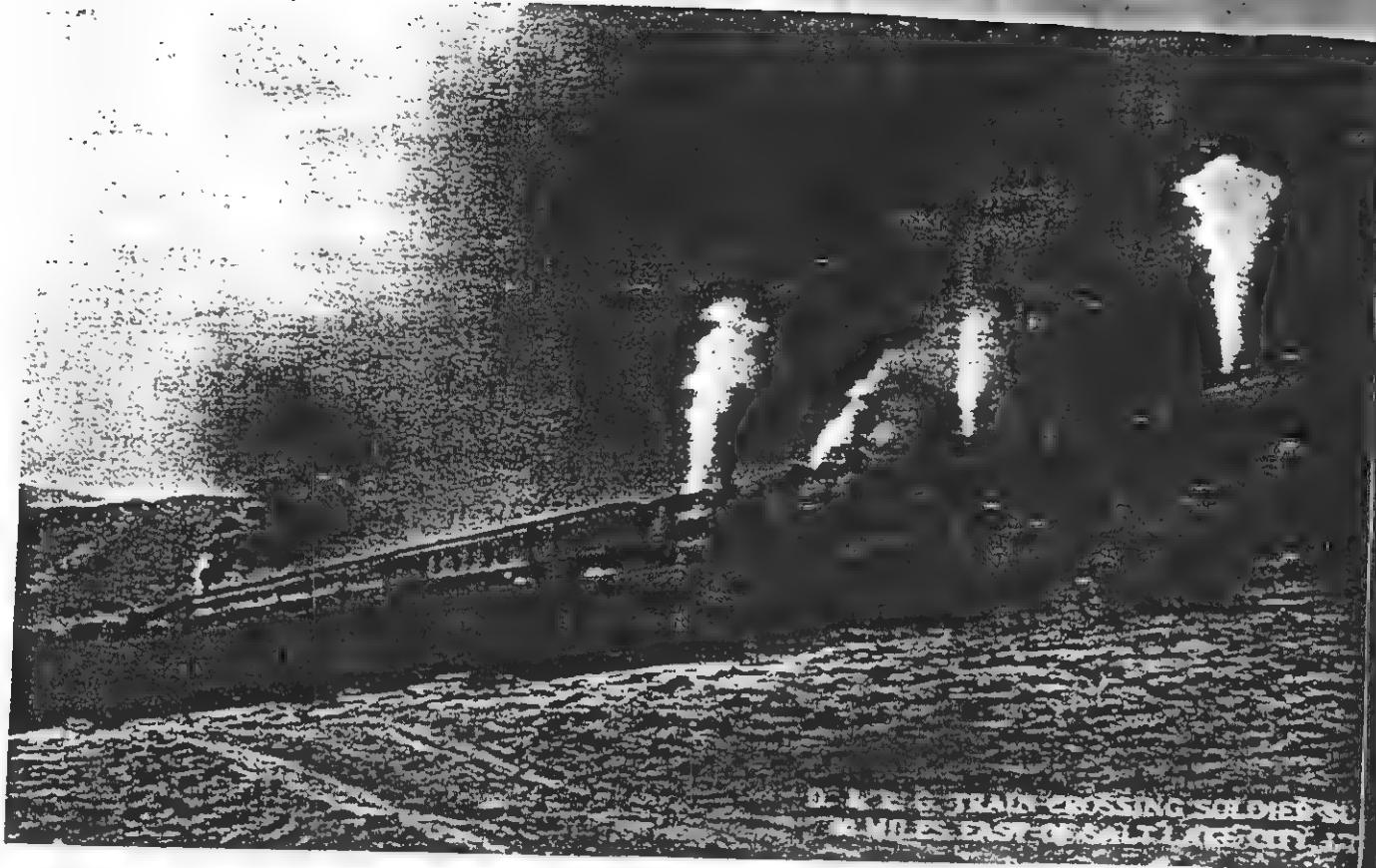
Early view of an area in Spanish Fork Canyon that is widely known for a spectacular view of brilliant fall colors. Through the years it has been called "Pole Canyon," the "Sterling Ranch," and "Pace's Ranch." Today the area is known as "Covered Bridge."



In 1911, the Rio Grande Western had this spectacular photograph made of its Panoramic Limited climbing the grade to Soldier Summit. The grade averaged over four percent and required one engine for each two passenger cars.



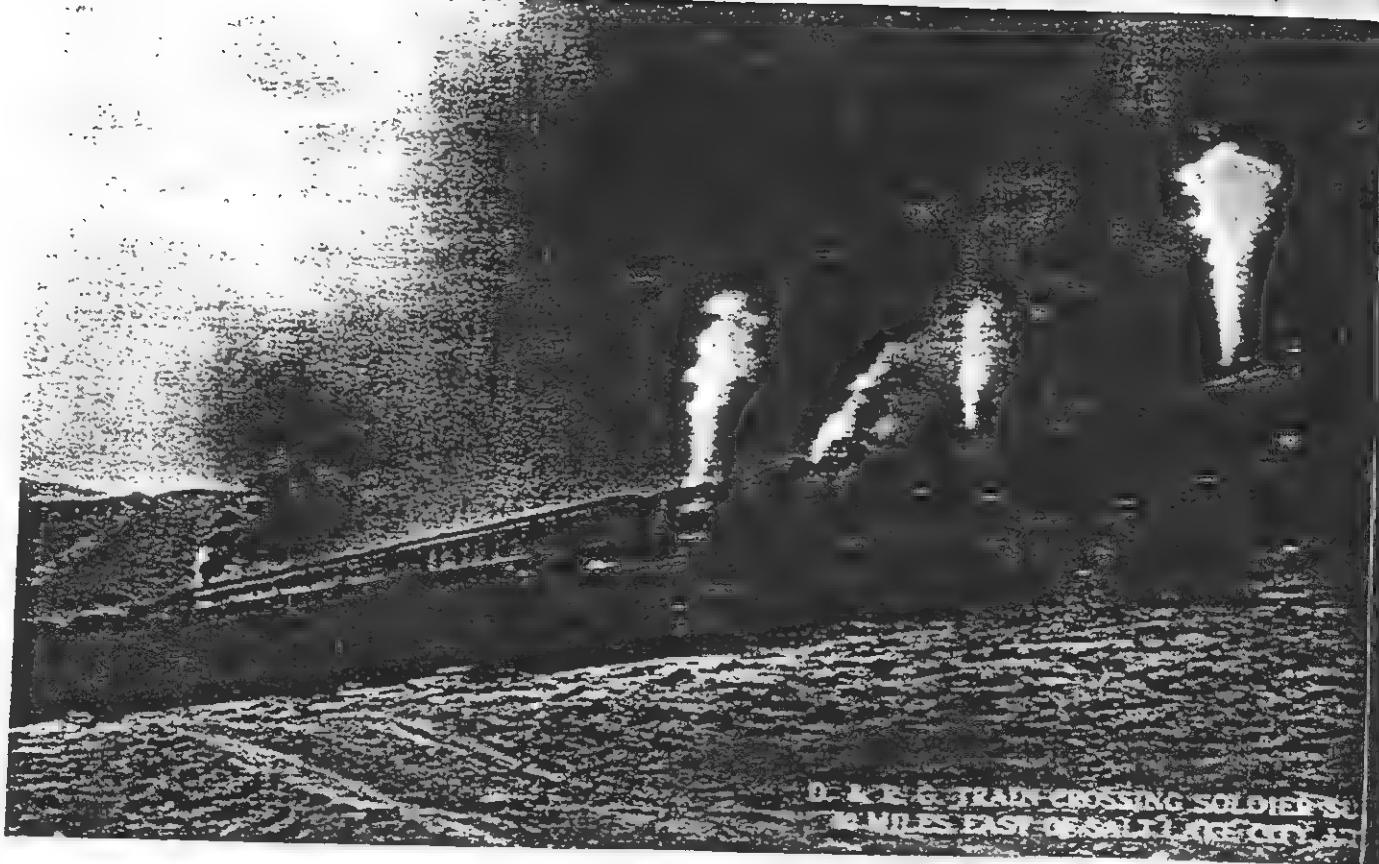
In 1913 the grade was reduced to two percent. Each engine could then pull five cars and train speed was increased from six to over eighteen miles per hour. The new grade was 4.49 miles longer, and contained a double horseshoe curve that made it possible for the engine and caboose of a long freight to be opposite each other and only a few hundred feet apart.



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## CASTILLA HOT SPRINGS

Between 7 and 9 miles up Spanish Fork Canyon was located an important resort known as Castilla Hot Springs.

In 1880, the Southworth family had a buisness in Pleasant Vally, later Called Colton.

Mrs. Daisy Southworth, who was in poor health, took occasion to bathe in the sulphurous hot water on their trips past the springs. When her health improved, she attributed the cure to the mineral water. In 1899, her husband, Sid Southworth died and Daisy's brother, Cyrus Dallin, who had become famous in the world of art, began to pay off the mortgage, after acquiring the property.

In 1891, Mrs. H.L. Southworth bought part intrest in Castilla, with a cash investement of \$50,000, the grounds were improved, lawn and trees were planted, walks laid out and graveled.

The resort was named by Geo. H. Brimhall, who taught at B.Y.U. and was involved with the Southworth family in the resort. The name Castilla was probably named in honor of the Spanish Fathers.

In its prime. It was a community of note, possessing a high class hostelry, with a restaurant, an indoor plunge, a private home, nineteen guest cabins, a dance pavilion, a saloon and cigar factory, a spacious park and grove, and even a school.

Castilla Hot Springs became one of the most popular resorts in Utah.

The D.&R.G.W.Railroad made the resort a stop for meals for its passenger trains for a number of years.

Trains came from Utah Vally, Price, Helper and Sanpete County. When Eureka and Tinic boomed, Moonlight Excursions came from the Juab mining district.

Many of the young people from Spanish Fork took advantage of the outings, as the fare from Spanish Fork to Castilla and return was 50¢. A good time was assured.

On holiday excursions, the trains arrived at 10 A.M. and there was a program with songs, resitations and speeches. There was picnic tables, baseball games, buggy rides and walks. In the evening, kerosene lamps were lit and dancing was enjoyed. At 10:45 P.M., the train left the cool canyon. In its prime, the resort was popular among the wealthy as well as the afflicted.

In 1917, Cyrus Dallin came to Utah from Boston and put the management under a relative, Glen Dalin, then in his teens. Glen proved an able manager and later became mayor of Springville.

For a number of years, Castilla was enjoyed by many different groups namely weddings, family outings, church groups, scout groups. Teen and older adult groups came for week ends. They brought their own tents as provisions. The indoor and outdoor plunges were available, and there was a confectionary store.

One group of girls brought their tent and food on a hayrack. They enjoyed swimming in the plunges, took hikes

up to Thistle, climbed the mountain and put pennies on the railroad tracks. They also had a project which they shared with two girls who lived near by. They trimmed the girls hair and each donated an item of clothing to them. Afterward, they treated them to a dinner. It was a worthwhile project that made everyone happy. They still talk about what fun it was.

In 1920, Geneva Steel, being in operation used the silica deposit near Castilla as flux for the furnace. They built a loading spur for the same. Which required dynamiting the flux from the mountain.

The buisness declined as the flow of the springs fell off, with restrictive laws and regulations causing problems.

Eventually, the buildings were torn down and hauled away, and the pool and plunges were destroyed. By 1970, the place was becoming a hangout for hippies and undesirables. By 1981, the once proud resort became a real problem.

Two reported murders had accurred at the spring. Trouble with the law took place and it was declared a public nuisance.

On 6 November 1981, county crews dynamited the remains and buried the rest.

By 3 May 1982, the water flow was down with three small springs trickling out of the base of the mountain at 90 degrees.

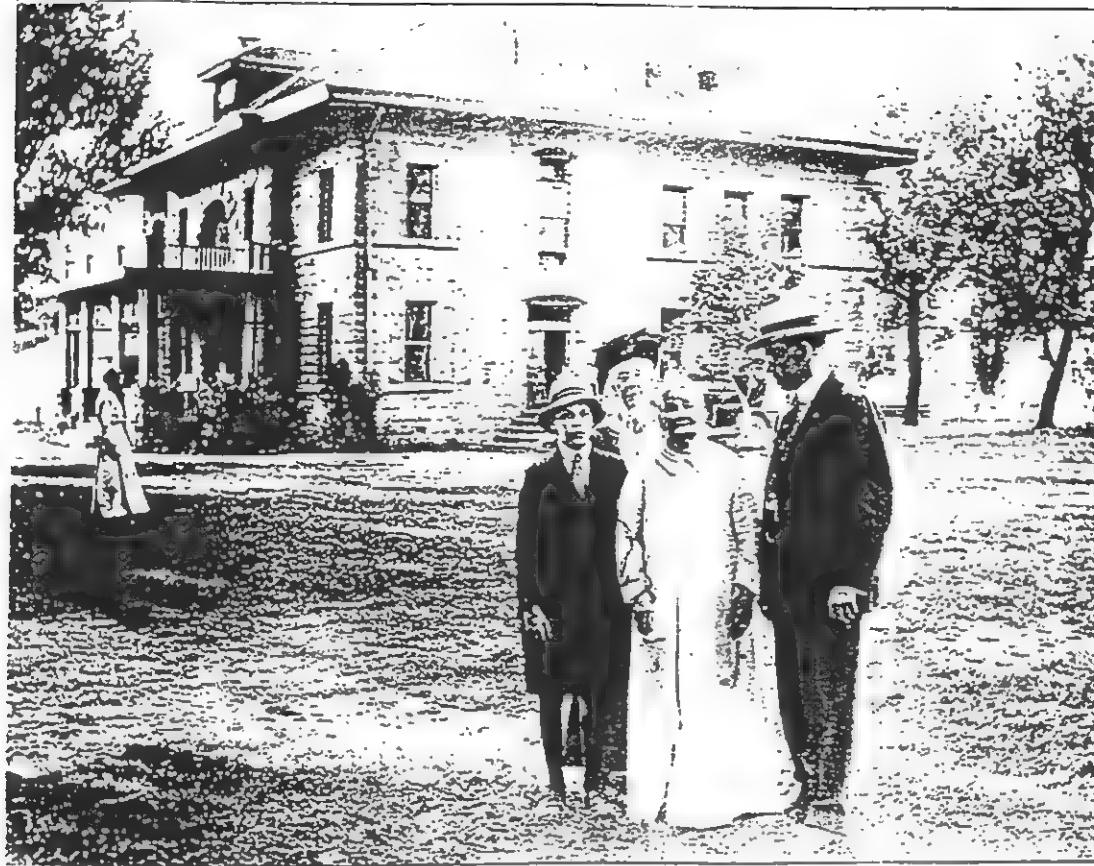
At the request of Kate B. Carter, National President of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, A letter was sent

to South Center Utah County D.U.P. to build a monument at the site of Castilla.

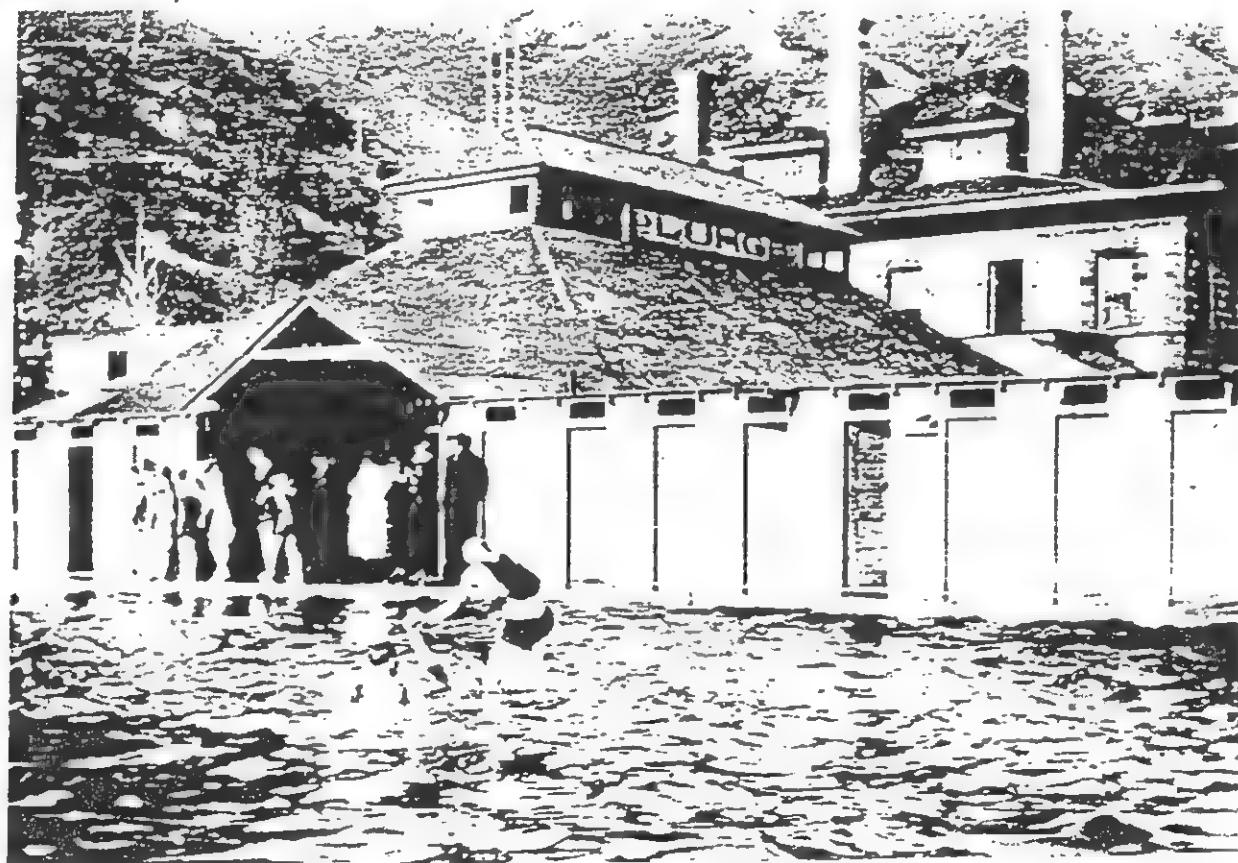
A registered letter was sent by Delila G. Williams, the South Center Utah County President, for permission from the family to build a historical monument on the site of Castilla. No answer was received from the family who were living in Florida. It was thought that those responsible had passed away.



Castilla Hot Springs Resort in Spanish Fork Canyon



Officials of the Castilla Hot Springs Resort:  
Right, Cyrus Dallin Center, his mother, Jane Hamer Dallin  
Back, his wife, Victoria Colonna Left, his son, Lawrence.



Inside and Outside Plunges at Castilla Hot Springs.



Waiting for the train at Castilla Springs Resort. It is possible--judging from the number of elderly people--that this

was an "Old Folks" outing. Photo George Anderson, courtesy Rell G. Francis.

## THISTLE

Thistle is 15 miles east of Spanish Fork, At one time, it was an important part of the canyon, and it still is. It was settled in 1889.

It was the headquarters of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad. Thistle, in its boom had 20 machinists and 18 boiler makers constantly employed. There were 3 service stations, a general store, a dance hall, pool hall, three other merchants and a gymnasium.

It was here that the steam engines would refuel before the assistant locomotives called 'helpers' were kept ready to pull the cars up the steep hill to Soldier Summit.

There were also two school houses, one red sandstone and the other white.

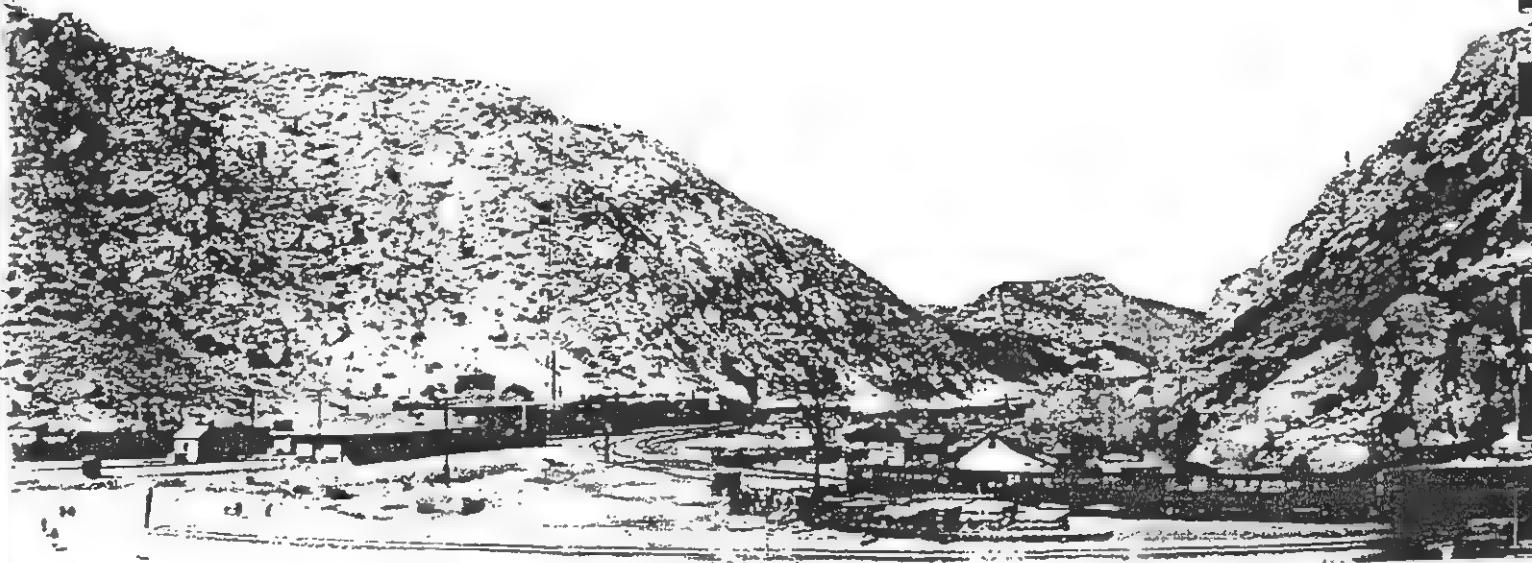
Around 1900, Thistles first engine house was built. It was later destroyed by fire in 1909. After diesel engines came into use, the need for helper engines changed.

In 1922, students attended the school untill it was sold. In early 1930, Merthyr Davis of Spanish Fork drove school bus, which later went up the canyon as far as Tucker, picked up students, and brought them to Spanish Fork. When he returned the students to their homes, he often stayed with families overnight. He drove these busses for 5 or 6 years., then his brother, Reece, drove them for 2 years.

It was in April of 1983, following a wet winter with heavy snowfall that portions of the mountain moved or slid, damning the river and causing much damage.

This mountain was noted for being very unstable. Sheepmen riding over this area remember it for being slippery, but the extent of what happened in 1983, known as the Thistle mud slide was unbelievable. A whole mountain cracked and slid. Hundreds of men and more than 100 pieces of equipment worked around the clock in a futile effort to tame nature, keep the mountain under control.

A complete and worthwhile book entitled 'Thistle--Focus on Disaster', has been written by Oneita Burnside Sumsion of Springville with many outstanding photo's of the area, is worth any interested persons time to pursue. This was published by Art City Publishing Company of Springville, Utah.



Thistle, Utah  
Scenic Line D&RGW R.R.

## RED NARROWS

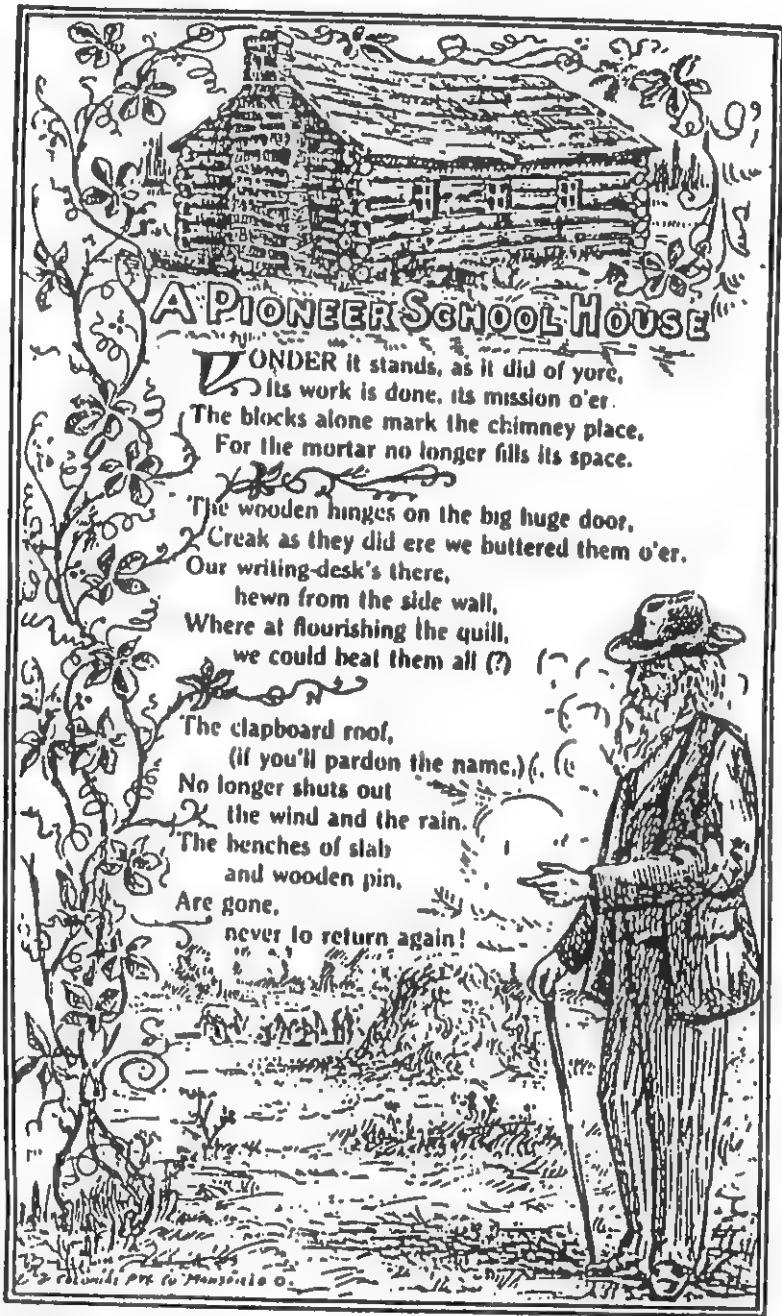
An area deserving our attention up a few miles from Thistle is the Red Narrows, with majestic mountains of red rock. It consists of rounded and water worn pebbles embedded in a finer cement like material. It is really consolidated gravel.

On the eastern side is an area know as dripping rock, fed from springs on the mountain where delicious cold water is piped and enjoyed by the many travelers.

Now, there is less water than in the past though probably because of the road change and dynamiting, which has affected the spring. There has also been drought, affecting the lack of water.



A Scene in Spanish Fork Canyon.



## TANK HOLLOW

Near the turn of the century, Morgan David Warner and his brother-in-law, John Lewis, homestead a ranch in Spanish Fork Canyon, in and area known as Mill Fork. Morgan built a home on the south side of the Spanish Fork River, west of Dairy Fork, in the mouth of a small canyon which became known as "Mog's Hollow." This place still bears his nickname. The family would live in their home in Spanish Fork during the winter and in the Spring they would move up to the canyon to run the farm in the summer months. It would take from daylight to dark to make the trip of twenty four miles. Several families lived up there and their children went to school there. Morgan's two oldest children, Myron and Mary, received part of their early schooling in the canyon. They also had a branch of the church for the families living in the canyon. John Fox Warner, Morgan's younger brother, lived close by for several years.

In 1914, Morgan's oldest son, Myron David, and his wife, Christy Tilley Warner, Homestead one hundred sixty acres in section 35. Township 9 South, Range 5 East. The area was known as "tank hollow." They worked side by side clearing the land and building a home. It was extremely hard work for both of them. The summer sun was hot and the roots of the sage brush were tough and big. There was very little refuge from the heat and dirt. But, in the evening when the sun went down the nights were cool and pleasant and they had each other, their little children, good friends

and family close by, and life for them was happy.

Christy loved flowers and the first thing she did when the home was built was plant four juniper trees around the house. She had to carry water from a spring some distance away to water her flowers and vegetable garden.

John F. Warner Jr., Myron's cousin, took up an adjoining homestead to the west. They worked together getting the ground ready for planting and harvesting the crops in the fall of the year. Several other families worked homesteads in the canyon at that time. They became a close knit group. They worked together helping each other when needed. But it wasn't all work, celebrations and picnics were enjoyed in the cottonwood grove near the head of Dairy Fork. There was much visiting back and forth. Christy would often load her three children on the back of a horse, climb on herself, and off to the neighbors they would go to spend the afternoon. Christy and her children, Ardell Warner, Johnnie's wife, and her children would pull a cart down to the railroad tracks and pick up the coal that had fallen off the coal cars that were traveling from the coal mines in Carbon County. Sometimes the train men would toss off more coal for them to pick up.

These trips to the canyon in the spring were made with great effort. The wagon was loaded with all their household furnishings, with the cows and horses tied on behind the wagon. Other animals, such as pigs, dogs and chickens were taken too. Every year they made the trip to the canyon

in the spring and back to Spanish Fork in the fall. They worked hard and some of the years they had good crops and and some of the years they didn't do so well.

The people that homestead in Spanish Fork Canyon were a rugged, hard working group, a second and third generation of pioneers. They were endowed with the knowledge and the spirit that had cleared acres and built homes across the continent of America. There were no workmen to be hired at that time, if they had the means with which to hire someone. The pioneer axiom, "Many hands make light work" was used frequently and help was given where help was needed. There is still a bond of friendship among the progenitors of the stalwart families who homestead in Spanish Fork Canyon in the early nineteen hundreds.

In 1918, Myron and Christy Warner sold their property in Spanish Fork Canyon.

The Warner History was submitted by Ellen Warner Young, Bernice Warner Bradford.

Morgan David  
Warner



&  
Rozetta Holt  
Warner



Myron David  
Warner



Ellen Christine  
Tilly Warner

From John F. Warner Jr.'s memories of the times spent in Spanish Fork Canyon with his cousin Myron David Warner.

Beginning from east to west, these are the names of the people who lived there; Aaron Chadwick, John Beagley, Ed Elliott, John S. Lewis, Morgan D. Warner, John F. Warner, and Bert Jones. We had a school at Mill Fork. The trustees names were Bert Jones and John Beagley. The teachers that I went to in the first grade was named Ed M. Rowe, who later became a professor at Brigham Young University. Another teacher, Miss Lyle Gardner, later became the wife of Dr. Joseph Hughes. I think Myron had two other teachers after we left by the name of Mr. Bigelow and Mr. Southworth.

The children who went to the school were, Violet Chadwick, that we always called Pink. Dow Chadwick and Cary Chadwick were just ready to start. The Elliott children were Ray and Osborn. Dick Beagley went to school part of time, his real name is Wallace. The Beagley's; Kate, who later married Allie Hales, and Pearl and Henry were also students. The Lewises were, Annie, Brigham, and Ralph. Preston may have started about the time we left there. And then in Uncle Mog's family there was Myron and Mary. And in Pa's (John Warner) family there was Elsie and John. Jesse may have started a little bit just before we left. Bert Jones was there. He is the son-in-law of John S. Lewis and he Married Mary Lewis Jones. They had two children in school, May and Cecil.

## SHEEP CREEK

This area was probably named for the herds of sheep that grazed on the grass that was abundant in the early days. Most of the ranchers had small herds of cattle they raised to sell.

At that time, the United States Government had a plan that people could take up 60 acres of land in the canyon. They had to build a cabin or house on the land and also improve the ground and plant crops. They had to live on the land nine months of the year, for seven years, then they would own the land. It was hard work, grubbing with a grubbing hoe to remove the sagebrush and improve the land.

A lot of families from Spanish Fork took up homesteads in Spanish Fork Canyon, but some never finished the seven years on the project.

John Samuel Lewis, who married Mary Jane Harris Warner was the first family to settle in Sheep Creek. Their children were--Mary Percilla, who married Frank Jones; John William, who married Maude Hicks; David Harris, who married Martha Lizetta Beagley; Charles Ezra, who married Marie Augusta Nelson; Leslie Franklin, who married Jane Thomas; Ann, who married Benjamin Spencer Woodward; Brigham, who married Elizabeth Siler; Ralph, who married Edna Miller; Preston, who married Josephine Alzina Hutchison.

Elder John Samuel Lewis was a prominent member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He held church